

In the land of endless sandstorms, a group of young actors has been working on an Aussie movie space epic

A NEW multi-million-dollar film now in production in Sydney draws a grim picture of life 100 years from now: a mineral-starved Earth, kept alive by gangs of workers on planets out in space.

Called 2084, this Star Wars-style adventure sets the action on the planet Ordessa, where young human subversives try to buck harsh conditions imposed on them by the police state governed by strong-man Jowitt, who is backed by a force of M.P. Droids, human-like robots.

Space ships land and depart and M.P. Droid forces are blown up as the three young heroes, helped by a tiny robot called Kid, try to overcome their oppressors.

The film is good fun, aimed at a young audience. It's Australia's answer to Star Wars, even though the production is a quarter of the cost of the George Lucas film.

The brainchild of British company Lorca Films, 2084 is being financed out of England and is a VTC-Rediffusion presentation with an English producer, director and cinematographer. The rest of the crew and all of the cast — except Kid the robot — are Australian.

The decision to film in Western Australia was made when producer Michael Guest and director Roger Christian went location hunting and found what they both consider is the best lunarscape on Earth.

In fact Mt Newman, in the north



An Aussie 'Star Wars'

ABOVE: Mean-man Jowitt orders the execution of a dissident in the sci-fi movie 2084, and (left) the Droids waste no time in complying.
RIGHT: Lorca and Kid head the fight for freedom.

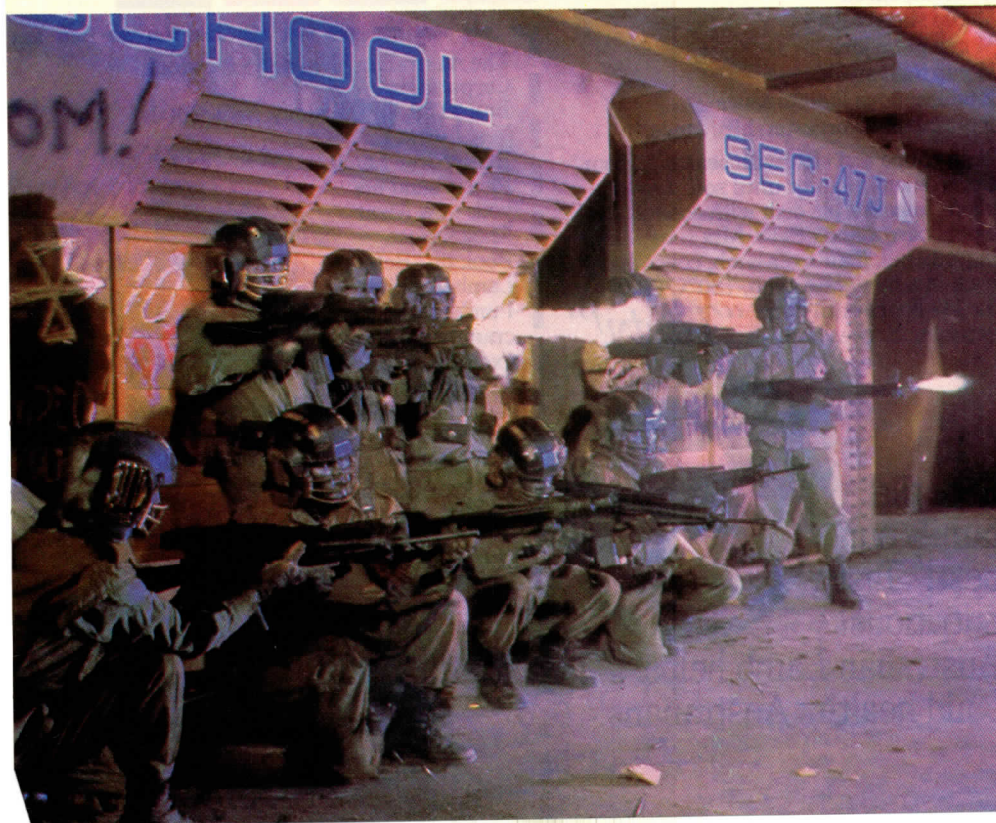
west, where most of the location filming takes place, is a duplicate of how director Christian first conceived Ordessa.

"Up there the red dust blows in swirls and ingrains everything it touches," he says.

Kid is played by actor Deep Roy, and Lorca by West Australia's John Tarrant.

Another desert location was The Pinnacles, limestone mounds encrusted with sand, which fascinate tourists to Western Australia. They stand on the horizon in varying sizes up to five metres and their shapes are so weird that it takes little imagination out in this wilderness to believe you are on another planet.

Although filming is now proceeding relatively quietly at Sydney's Mort Bay studios in Balmain, the cast and





crew are still recovering from their gruelling location work.

Temperatures at Mt Newman were over the 38-degree mark during the day, but plunged to freezing point at night.

It took three weeks to prise the last of the red dust from fingernails and clothes, and tempers were at breaking point at the end of two weeks. After each long day of filming, another five hours were spent pulling equipment and cameras apart to clean them.

"I think if we had to spend another day in Mt Newman we would have all been nervous wrecks," says Michael Guest. "It was extraordinarily hard on us all."

Nevertheless, the suffering paid dividends, for the footage is pure magic and both Guest and Christian are ecstatic with the results.

The stars of the show are all young unknowns except for Kid. Deep Roy, the actor who plays the part inside a mask, is used to filming. He's been a gremlin, demon, monkey or space creature in a number of major motion pictures, including Greystoke — The Legend Of Tarzan, Star Wars and Dark Crystal.

'Unknowns' get their chance for stardom

Deep Roy was born in Kenya of well-to-do Indian parents and though they spent a lot of money trying to make him grow, he is just 126 cm tall.

However, his size has paid off for him in the film industry. He is in hot demand and flies immediately to the U.S. after 2084 has completed principal photography to take on another sci-fi role.

For John Tarrant, Cassandra Webb and Donagh Rees, 2084 is the chance of a lifetime for it has plucked them from obscurity and looks set to launch them world-wide.

Twenty-year-old John (Lorca) has heart-throb good looks and is dedicated to acting, which he has been pursuing since he left school at 15. The sizzling appeal that John portrays on screen could well mean Mel Gibson has competition in the future.

Cassandra Webb (Suzi) was raised in America but her mother is Australian, which is why Actors Equity had no objections to her casting. It is ironic, nonetheless, that Australia, not Hollywood, should end up offering her the big break she has prayed for for the past three years while treading the pavements of Los Angeles.

New Zealander Donagh Rees makes up the trio and she bears an uncanny likeness to superstar Meryl Streep. Donagh is a straightforward, pull-no-punches sort of a girl in real life, so she fits the role of tomboy Abbie, who is a deft hand with explosives.

The film will be distributed in Australia by Filmways and plans are for a 1985 release, which means there'll only be 99 years left — if you believe in fantasy.

Sherry Stumm